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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Omnipotent Sovereign God, beneath whose all-seeing eye our mortal lives are passed, may all our deeds and purposes today bring honor to You. Lord, save us from pride and arrogance, and help us to be quick to see the needs of those less fortunate than ourselves and promote goodwill and fellowship among all people.

Today, bless our lawmakers. Let their motives be transparent and their word be their bond. May they be generous in their judgment of others, loyal in their friendships, and magnanimous to their opponents.

Sovereign God, let every knee be bent before You and every tongue confess that You are Lord.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks the Senate will be in morning business until 5 p.m. today.

At 5 p.m. the Senate will be in executive session to consider a couple nominations for United States district judges. One is for Pennsylvania and one is for New Mexico. At 5:30 p.m. there will be at least one rollcall vote on the confirmation of the nominations. The Restrepo and Gonzales nominations are the two nominations we have. Restrepo is from Pennsylvania and Gonzales is from New Mexico.

Following those votes, the Senate will resume consideration of the immigration bill.

BUDGET CONFERENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it has been 86 days since the Senate passed its budget. We have been through this on several occasions. We have had Republican Senators come and criticize the Republican leadership here for not letting us go to conference. They talked about their wanting regular order so we could move forward in dealing with the financial crisis facing this country, but they have ignored us.

We are proud of the budget we passed. It was hard, but it reflects our priorities: protecting middle-class families and growing the economy. Even though that is the case, we are still willing to work out a compromise with our Republican counterparts.

We are not going to get everything we want. That is what conferences are all about. They have been going on in this country for more than two centuries. But we believe our sound fiscal policy would stand out as being so much better than what they have done in the House. We could do this through the regular order of the budget process. Unfortunately, Democrats and Republicans are not going to find common ground if we never start negotiating. As I said, for 86 days Republican leaders have objected to a conference with the House of Representatives. In conference, Democrats and Republicans could work together to work out our

differences—differences between our budgets as well as our priorities. But Senate Republicans have objected to a conference time and time again.

Today, I read in the Hill newspaper called Politico that the House Republicans are more than happy for their Senate colleagues to obstruct and delay. They know a budget conference would only put the spotlight on divisions within the House Republican caucus. Here is what the article said:

Going to conference to match the House and Senate-passed budgets—or making any movement on the budget right now—could open up a schism in the [Republican] caucus on spending that for months leadership has managed to keep mostly at bay.

So what they are saying is the Republican leadership over here is protecting the House. The House Republican leadership understands they cannot agree on anything—nothing. Therefore, objecting to this is the right thing to do because they will never get out in the open as to how crazy their budget priorities are.

But as Senate Republicans cover for their dysfunctional House colleagues, the country inches closer to another crisis: a default on the Nation's bills.

Reasonable Republicans are just as concerned as I am about this last manufactured crisis—a crisis that would undercut the economic progress of the last 4 years. Those reasonable Republicans have come to the floor repeatedly to call on Republican leaders to stop blocking bipartisan budget negotiations. I hope those reasonable Republicans prevail. I hope Republican leaders in the House and in the Senate will stop bowing to tea party extremists and listen to the more reasonable Members of their caucus.

I repeat, Republican Senators have arrived here on the floor on more than one occasion and criticized our not being able to go to conference. So if past is prologue, using the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government as a political hostage will not only be bad

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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